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PEOPLE

Burton is turning back the clock to keep Suzy happy.

Richard Burton joins pop scene for wife's sake

By EDWARD FORSYTHE
for The Gazette

LONDON — Richard Burton, who now wants to be a pop star, is dancing around the stage. Despite his years he looks every bit the wiry 31-year-old.

The Welsh-born actor has joined with two well-known British popular singers — David Essex and Julie Covington — to make a rock opera. He plans to take part with the two in other singing ventures.

Shakespeare, whose words Burton the actor once made ring, would understand. Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty.

Proving that he is still strong and lusty — and proving it to an attractive young wife — is driving Burton to turn back the clock, says one of Richard's relatives. And it's turning Elizabeth Taylor's former consort into a slightly pathetic figure.

As one young singer providing background chorus work said:

He is like an old entertainer trying to recapture his youth.

At first it is very exciting. Then it gets a little pathetic. You realize he is out of depth and time. It is alright for a 20-year-old to jump about on the stage with tight pants. But when you see Richard Burton wearing jeans and pretending to be a teenager — well, it is rather embarrassing.

Last August Burton married 28-year-old Suzy Hunt, former wife of racing driver James Hunt.

According to one of Burton's relatives, Hunt was a dynamic man, who "jetted all over the world with Suzy, and when not racing was dancing with her until the early hours of the morning in some noisy disco or other. Then he would take her for a swim.

That is what Suzy got used to. In fact she sometimes complained that it was all too much for her.

Now she is with Richard — who has slowed down considerably.

Suzy at first loved the tranquility which Burton gave her, the relative said. But in recent months friends have noticed she looks bored at times and restless.

The relationship hasn't been helped by the fact that Burton's famous lifestyle — hard drinking and hard playing — has taken its toll of his physical energy.

What is more, it is not just a physical thing. Suzy is not of his generation. She is sometimes puzzled about the things which matter to him. He talks a lot about his soul in Wales and so on. This does not register with Suzy.

Burton's friends are all over 30 — and although she was at first excited by knowing such famous and actresses, I sometimes notice her stifling a yawn.

A former fashion model, Suzy learned early on to watch what she ate and drank. Then there was her marriage to Hunt, who believed in keeping very fit — Suzy has laughingly described him as a physical culture nut — including little drinking.

Richard is an artist — a sensitive man," the observer said. "He senses something is wrong.

Richard is desperately anxious that his marriage to Suzy should now disintegrate.

He failed to hold Elizabeth Taylor, and if he fails now with Suzy as well it will be a terrible blow to him. That is why he is suddenly trying to recapture his youth with this plan to become a pop star.

The irony is that Burton doesn't need the money, and has never even expressed a wish to sing — he once said the pop music Liz's children played nearly drove him out of his mind.

Burton however is not put off by the critical comments of his friends and family. Eagerly he is making plans to launch his rock musical as a stage show then possibly as a film.

Richard is really excited about this venture — the first time he has ever become involved in such an enterprise," said one of his spokesmen in London. "It shows a youthful enterprising spirit. And because he is Richard Burton he is putting his heart and soul into it.

One of his friends is not so charitable.

It is tough going when you are 51. But there you are — it is the penalty any older man has to pay when he takes upon himself a beautiful young bride.

Pink Floyd's high — on golf

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

PHILADELPHIA — It was intermission at Pink Floyd's concert at the Spectrum this city's Forum and Mark, a 16-year-old in the audience of 19,500, looked glum.

He clutched a small silver pipe filled with hashish and he muttered disgustedly. "The only problem is, I've run out of matches." His bloodshot eyes betrayed a trace of tears.

Finally, his face sweaty and drawn Mark disappeared into the halls of the arena. Five minutes later he returned, a smile on his face, waving a book of matches. "I sponged some off a security guard."

The drama was over and Mark was ready to enjoy the second half of a show by the world's most popular "head-rockers" which winds up its six-month tour of America and Europe with a concert next Wednesday before 80,000 fans at Olympic Stadium in Montreal.

If Mark had not found some matches, the Pink Floyd concert might have been a bummer, because the British rock quartet is virtually unlistenable without the aid of mind-altering condiments.

Without dope, the sounds and visual gimmickry of the group could be termed so much hokum. But with pot or hash Pink Floyd offers a veritable feast for the head.

Package

The group has attracted more people on its current North American tour than any other rock ensemble. It's not Pink Floyd's music, such as it is defined, that is the main selling point but, rather, the visual-aural package.

Among the approximately $2 million worth of equipment, Pink Floyd boasts smoke bombs, fireworks, two hydraulic crates equipped with lights, two light towers, a huge round movie screen, strobe lights, quadrophonic (four-channel) sound, and plastic inflatable animals, topped by a huge pink pig that emanates from a burst of smoke and hovers over the audience.

The group numbers four but there is a crew of 60 to support them. Indeed, the members of Pink Floyd — who have survived the 1970s intact — are almost ancillary compared to the technicians who make the show click.

The group would not have played Philadelphia were it not for the truck drivers who broke the 55 mph speed limit to get 10 trucks worth of equipment in Philly from Boston in time for the five hours needed to set up the concert that afternoon.

Staggering

They wouldn't have played a note were there not scores of technicians and stage hands surrounding them to make sure their notes came through loud and clear and accompanied by the appropriate visual gimmick.

It is the magnitude of what Pink Floyd does on stage that appeals to the imagination. It makes dreams and visions and surrealism come to real-life on stage. All the audience needs is dope to go into fantasy-land. In fact, Pink Floyd is to drugs what Musak is to supermarkets.

The size of the operation is staggering, in show-business terms. "We make embarrassingly little money from this tour," says agent Allan Frey. But the tour helps sell records. The group's upcoming Olympic Stadium appearance will account for 5,000 local sales of 'Dark Side of the Moon', an album that is over four years old.

Pink Floyd harkens back to the age of psychedelia, which began in 1967, and today the group's drug-geared show is seen as matter-of-fact. The group began in 1965, the tail-end of 'Beatlemania' and the beginnings of what was to be termed "art-rock" — denoting a more ethereal form of pop music. This was pop that did not appeal to rhythmic instincts inspired by black rhythm 'n' blues but to the "head" — as fed by drugs. Ambiguity suddenly took on meaning and layer-upon-layer of sound and appropriately obscure lyrics became something the listener could get into.

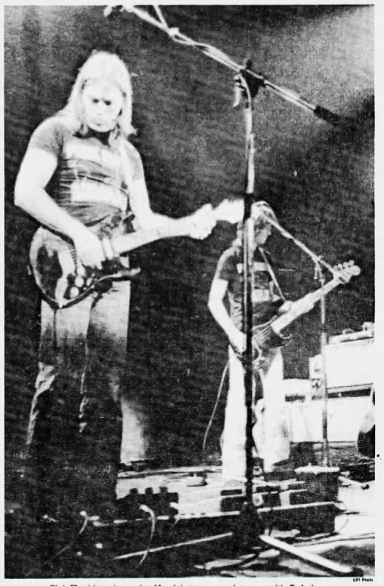
Body limp

While the body remained limp, the mind was tickled by the eccentricities of Pink Floyd.

Back then they were mere students at the Regent Street Polytechnic Architectural School (Roger Waters, Nick Mason, and Rick Wright being original members, and they were called the Tea Set, the Architectural Abdads, the Abdads, and the Pink Floyd Sound before settling on Pink Floyd (named after two obscure American blues singers).

They were led by another art school friend, Syd Barrett, who composed, sang and played guitar on their first single, entitled 'Arnold Layne,' a song about a transvestite that, in 1967, was banned by BBC radio.

Pink Floyd immediately became the toast of the London underground.



Pink Floyd is to drugs what Musak is to supermarkets says critic Rodgriguez.

Barrett, who pioneered the group's visionary light-show (Pink Floyd was the first British group to consider the visual aspect of its show as important as the sound), freaked-out from too much drugs in 1969 and left the group. David Gilmour was acquired as guitarist and Pink Floyd began to hone a commercially acceptable style.

Quebecois fans were the first in North America to embrace Pink Floyd's spaced-out style on a mass scale, probably because the the group's sound provided the soundtrack for the nationalistic euphoria that has become commonplace today.

Their turning point was a soundtrack to the film 'More,' which depicted the decadence of the imbibing of heroin and LSD on the Spanish island of Ibiza. The music was mystical and spacey — meant to accompany a vision of the hazards of excessive drug-taking — and it became the tone of Pink Floyd's eventual success.

By the time of 'Dark Side of the Moon,' (1972) it became clear the drug-taking on a mass scale was the key to Pink Floyd's success. Their layers of sound had become more dense (with more for a "high" mind to plow through), tyhere rhythmic pace was casual, slow-motion, and their melodies were as portuntory as scales.

Pink Floyd became masters of trips for the masses, continuing with such mindless opuses as 'Wish You Were Here' and the current 'Animals', a supposedly Orwellian vision of society but in reality little more than a foundation for the group's various technological gimmickry.

Today, the group's "biggest high on the tour is playing golf on their days off," according to one member of the massive crew.

Their fans are not nearly so blase. Floyd open its show to the sound of a jet plane crashing through the P.A. speakers, and when the pink pig floats through the smoke-filled atmosphere.

There are fevered cheers when the round movie screen portrays the animations of cartoonist Gerald Scarfe, formerly of the satirical British magazine 'Private Eye' and most recently of the 'Sunday Times.'

The crowd at the Philadelphia Spectrum clapped and whistled and chanted for a full seven minutes before Pink Floyd came on for its well-orchestrated encore, and another five minutes for the second. The group has accorded three encores only once on this tour (Oakland) but don't be surprised if they do so at the Olympic Stadium next week.

Montrealer smooths way for rock world's top stars

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

PHILADELPHIA — "Everybody wants to be a star" says a popular saying in the world of rock music.

But not everyone can be a star and, then again, the stars could not be without the vast industry worth billions of dollars annually.

Norman Perry, a 23-year-old Montrealer is one of these behind-the-scenes industry people. Perry is the "advance man" for Pink Floyd, and has worked for the biggest names in rock over past six years. He travels to each city on British rock group's itinerary, checking out halls to see how it can equip its massive arsenal of equipment, setting up hotel registrations. "With a crew of 60," he says, "It's important to get everyone in and out of the hotel quickly" — and making sure all parts of the operations — are working smoothly when the group hits town.

Perry started out running a Westmount youth centre when he was 17.

"I wanted to make it more than just a place where somebody could smoke dope," he says. "So I started organizing the basement as a rehearsal band for local rock groups."

Mahogany Rush, a local trio which has been making its mark on U.S. audiences, were among the first to rehearse there. Soon Perry began working at Forum rock shows. "I started out carting in equipment" to the point where he became stage manager and decided to try for luck in Britain.

He spent 3½ years there, working for such groups as The Rolling Stones, the Who, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Yes, and, of course, Pink Floyd.

"I don't mean to knock a big group, but I prefer working for a Peter Gabriel, who I know I can help instead of just serve." He says he makes a decent living, "but I'm not concerned with how much I make. I'm in it for the experience."

Working for top stars in a fast-paced demimonde provides hairy moments for the Montrealer.

Peter Townshend of the Who wanted to play a smaller theatre, the Lyceum in London. The place was packed, and the barricade separating the stage from the audience was somehow connected to the lighting towers. When the people started pressing in on the stage, the speakers began to shake. We had to stop the show and get the crowd to move back. If the speakers had fallen they would have killed 15 people easily."

Perry is also the American agent for a European T-shirt pop music manufacturer, Brockum, which pulls in $1 million annually.

"I'm only home maybe five days every two months," he says. "It keeps me on the move and I'm learning all the time. That's the thing I enjoy so much about thus business these days."

Spoken like a young man who may be a millionaire by the time he's 30.

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